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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Increased Contact with the West/Freedom of Movement
and Communication/Friendly Attitude Toward Individual US
Citizens /Change to Government by a Legislative BodyPLACE ACQUIRED
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1. Increasing numbers of people are displaying an interest in what goes on in the USSR and the Soviet Government is apparently progressively more willing that they should do so. On arrival at the Hotel National, we found the British and French trade commissions and numerous individuals. One individual who intrigued us was an Englishman from South Africa, who said he was there on vacation. Under questioning, he said his job was political.
2. Last year when a similar group [redacted] arrived at the Moscow airport, it created considerable excitement but when we arrived 4 April, there was no display of interest. The arrival of visitors from the west is becoming commonplace.
3. We had flown in from Warsaw and the pilot brought us in exactly on time, making a fast hot-wheel landing so smoothly we did not need the seat belts which Soviet planes never have anyway.
4. The people we met were all friendly and helpful. We saw no evidence of surveillance, and communication with the outside world was easy. I called my home in the US with even less trouble than my brother had in calling me from the US. The time allotted for such calls is 4:00 to 7:00 PM, Moscow time. About 3:50 PM, I went to the hotel desk to put the call in. At 4:10 PM my wife was on the line and the connection was excellent. My brother in calling me had notified the telephone company the day previous and the call came through at a few minutes past four. The cost of the call I made was 48 rubles.
5. A good example of the friendly spirit occurred when two of us visited the Bolshoi Theater. We arrived late for the first act and stepped into one of the stalls to see it. Two Soviets insisted we take their seats.
6. We were never refused a request to see or visit anything, there were excuses for not showing us things that might irritate us or discredit the USSR in our eyes. We had to admit we saw what they wanted us to see. A request to see a collective farm brought the observation there was nothing to see but mud at that time of the year. In Leningrad, we asked to see the Museum of Religion where we understood they attempted to prove the basis of religion is false.

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Our time was limited and they merely ignored our request and took us off to see the more common tourist attractions, such as the battlefields.

7. Mail I sent out was delivered promptly. Any censorship would necessarily have been handled promptly. There was no evidence of any. I wandered into the post office at midnight to send an airmail letter home. The language barrier was troublesome but the clerks were patient and courteous and got the letters handled promptly.
8. Foreign periodicals on sale were only the ones known to be communistic. There was not a single one presenting an unbiased view of the West, and were all full of hate-America propaganda.
9. The people encountered were cordial and talked uninhibitedly. Despite the fact they have been subjected to the hate propaganda, they displayed none of it toward us. Many expressed a desire to see the US and asked questions which displayed their total lack of a clear understanding of our intentions. The common question was why the US wanted to wage war against them. When we tried to assure them that was not our desire, they would ask why then were we building a ring of military posts around them. Our reply was that they were necessary to protect us from their 160 divisions. This left them a bit puzzled, that we were preparing to protect ourselves from them when they were so intent on promoting peace. Also, they seemed astonished to learn that they had an army of such size.
10. Although they had no opportunity to see US papers, they were all convinced that the news published was distorted to present everything to the US advantage. They did not feel this was forced by the US Government but that newspaper owners were all capitalists and did it on their own.
11. The artificial rate of exchange discourages travel in the USSR and visits of any more than a minimum length. We considered a 10-day trip to Stalingrad but gave it up when we learned it would cost 1500 dollars each.
12. Moscow is one large public works project. There is still a serious housing shortage but apartment houses are being completed at the rate of 100 apartments per day. The construction plan of 1935 is being put into effect with the result that the streets and squares are spacious enough to handle the traffic if they ever should produce automobiles on the scale done in the US. Gorky Street, for example, is about 145 feet wide.
13. Stalin's pictures are everywhere but Malenkov's is rarely displayed. Guides in describing the projects give the credit to the government and not as they used to do, to the individual. This supports the idea often heard expressed that the government today is a group of men and not an individual.
14. The people certainly looked well fed and clothed, although the clothing is drab and all alike.
15. There are disturbing things; thought control, the hate-America line, too many soldiers. But there are also the encouraging things mentioned above, and I came away with a real hope that we are getting some where in solving the differences between them and ourselves.

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